

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE

FAITH *for life*

“The **life** which I now live...I live by the **faith** of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

Complimentary Copy

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knowing & loving God

a message by **pastor tony scheving**

Jeremiah 9:23-24 says, “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”

What is the goal of your life? Why are you here on this earth? We live in a world that is obsessed with “self.” People are either trying to find themselves or investing in themselves. The search for “self” has become big business as retailers sell self-helps, inner-self awareness, self-success and self-sufficiency. You would think that all of this focus on *self* would lead to great fulfillment, and yet *me-ism* doesn’t deliver the “fuller life” it promises. This “self fad” is a counterfeit that leaves people in dire straits with an empty vacuum. Seeking to *know ourselves* is a dead end street. Our Creator tells us in the Bible passage above

that the goal in life is not to know ourselves, but to know **Him**! As we consider this truth, let’s look at the following thoughts.

The Waste

The passage above tells us that we can waste our lives pursuing various things. Notice how it says, “Let not the wise man glory (gloat) in his wisdom.” The Bible speaks of this type when it says “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:22). There are some people who are into *knowledge* and *education*. They think intelligence is “where it’s at.” Often pride accompanies education. The Bible says “*knowledge puffeth up*” (I Corinthians 8:1). God adds in Isaiah 5:21, “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes.”

Someone wisely said, “it’s remarkable how much you have to know before you realize how little you really know.” Life is a matter of going from ignorance to uncertainty. We all spend a lifetime learning, only to die with all of that knowledge. There are some who think that education is the answer to our social woes. You can educate somebody until they become a “clever devil”, but it won’t fix the real problem of sin in this world. Secondly, the passage above mentions those who seek “*might*” or power. There are many who seek to be somebody with a “position or power.” Many try to climb the ladder of life to gain respect and recognition in an attempt to meet their own emotional needs. They want to be a somebody who is looked up to. The Bible sites many examples like Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Herod who sought preeminence. Thirdly, the passage above mentions those who seek for *riches* or *wealth*. Is money really where it’s at? In 1923, a group of the world’s most

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FAITH *for life*

Knowing and Loving God *continued from page 1*

successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the United States Treasury. For years newspapers and magazines had been printing their success stories and urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples. Within twenty-seven years, what had happened to them?

Charles Schwab, who was the president of the world's largest independent steel company, lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life, and died penniless. Arthur Cutten, the great wheat speculator, died abroad in debt. Richard Whitney, the President of the New York Stock Exchange, went to prison in Sing Sing. Albert Fall, the member of the President's Financial cabinet, was pardoned from prison so he could die at home. Jesse Livermore, the greatest trader on Wall Street, committed suicide. Leon Fraser, the president of the Bank of Intl. Settlement, committed suicide. Ivar

Krueger, the head of the world's greatest monopoly, committed suicide. Apparently wealth isn't all it's cracked up to be, and shouldn't be the goal in life. The Bible verse above tells us the goal in life should be to understand and know God. Anything else can be a waste.

The Worthwhile

Our culture has a pitiful value system. Our priorities are often out of whack. Unless God is the pursuit of life, there will be no real fulfillment or joy in life. Paul the apostle said, *"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"* (Philippians 3:8). This is not some sterile theology...this is the very purpose of life. Mankind is not some accident of nature that just happened to evolve. We were created by God, and we are sustained by God. Everything that happens on this globe is permitted and controlled by God. When we make God the goal, some wonderful and worthwhile things happen.

In the Bible verse above, God says, *"Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD."* First of all, when we know God, we know peace. The Bible says, *"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7).

Secondly, when we get to know God, we'll desire to be like Him. The Bible says, *"as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy"* (1 Peter 1:15). Thirdly, when we get to know God, we will have a right perspective of ourselves. When Isaiah the prophet got a glimpse of God in all of His glory he said, *"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD"* (Isaiah 6:5).

Fourthly, the knowledge of God gives us strength for the journey of life. The Bible says, *"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits"* (Daniel 11:32). Finally, the more we know God, the better we will see "the big picture" (Daniel 4:34-35).

We'll view the economy, politics, terrorism and everything else in a totally different way. We will realize that God isn't sitting on the edge of His throne in heaven on the verge of panic. God may be out of sight, but He's not out of touch, and He's not at all intimidated by current events. This should calm our fears. In fact a serious journey to know God will change your life. But God is never found by accident. Pursue the worthwhile.

The Way

In the Bible passage above God says, *"I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth."* That is wonderful to know. The Psalmist said of God, *"He hath set His love upon me... He hath known my name"* (Psalm 91:14).

We live in a world of chaos and disorder. People are resorting to countless pills and drugs to calm their anxiety. The medical world is continually finding new disorders. The prophet said of God, *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in Thee"* (Isaiah 26:3). It all boils down to knowing God which starts with being born-again (John 3:5).

Our nation has become a land of intellectual giants, and spiritual pygmies. America is filled with religious people who desperately need to experience God. They talk a lot about Him, but they don't really know Him. On judgment day many will sadly hear those words from God, *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:23). Jesus said, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see (understand) the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). For an explanation of this, please see pages 6-7 of *Faith for Life*. Only by being born again spiritually can we really know God. Jesus prayed in John 17:3, *"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent."* There is a heavenly Father who loves you and knows the number of hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30). If you would like to really know God, may I challenge you to read His love letter to you (the Bible). Start in the book of Matthew and read through the New Testament.

If you would like spiritual help, please feel free to e-mail me at RevSkev@faithforlife.net.

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Cuttlefish

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20)

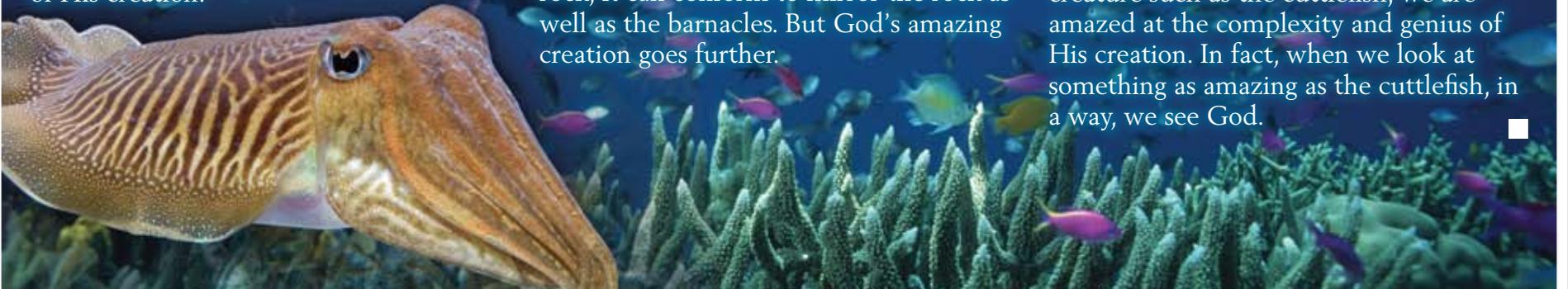
What if we could see the signature of a Creator imbedded upon His creation? For years, the debate has raged: is there a God? How can we be sure? Christians are often confronted with the challenge of proving the existence of God. And yet He can be seen throughout the marvels of His creation.

Romans 1:20 tells us, *"The invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen...by the things that are made."* So can we really see an invisible God simply by looking around us?

The cuttlefish is a cephalopod, which operates with such sophisticated technology that scientists today are struggling to understand just how this creature came to be. This creature is a perfect example of God's magnificent design, demonstrating stealth tactics, among other features, which include not only changing colors, but also texture, to blend in perfectly with its surroundings. If it is perched atop a barnacle-covered rock, it can conform to mirror the rock as well as the barnacles. But God's amazing creation goes further.

The cuttlefish can perform this feat in a split second, and never even look at itself to examine its disguise. He does it by instinct. God is showing forth His glory through His creation. If we see a painting, we understand there is a painter. Though we may not see him, we know he exists. If we see a complex space shuttle, we understand that this did not come about by accident.

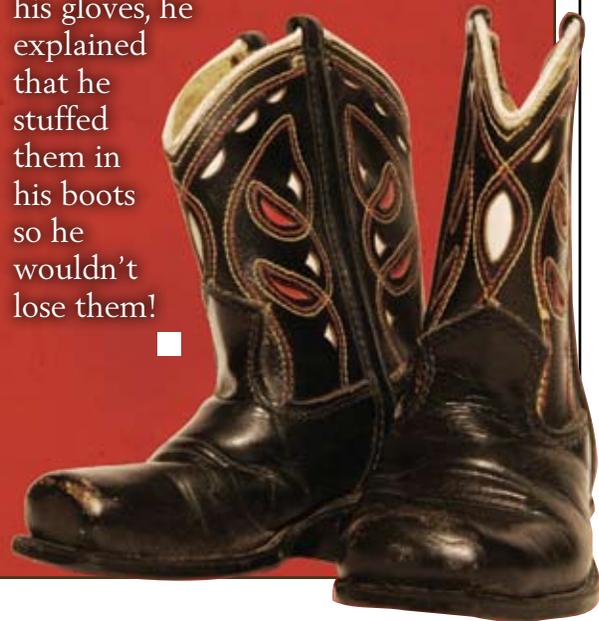
We understand that complexity demands an intelligent designer. The amazing thing is that this Designer has told us in His Word to examine His creation in order to "see" Him. And when we take a look, even at a humble sea creature such as the cuttlefish, we are amazed at the complexity and genius of His creation. In fact, when we look at something as amazing as the cuttlefish, in a way, we see God. ■



KIDS DO THE CRAZIEST THINGS!

At the end of Sunday School on a cold winter morning, Mrs. Nelson saw a little boy struggling with his cowboy boots, so she knelt down to help him. After quite a battle of pushing and shoving to get them on, the little guy said, "They're on the wrong feet." She looked down in disbelief and sure enough he was right, so she worked with no less effort to pull them off and start again. She finally got them secured on the right feet only to hear him say, "These aren't my boots." They

battled again to pull them off and when they finished he explained, "They're my brother's boots and my mom made me wear them because I lost my boots." Mrs. Nelson went through the drill again and finally got the boots back on the little feet. She lifted him up off the floor and helped him put on his coat. When she asked about his gloves, he explained that he stuffed them in his boots so he wouldn't lose them! ■

A poster for campus Bible studies at MSUM and NDSU. The top half features MSUM with a building image and the text: Mondays 7:00 PM CMU 227, Thursdays 8:30 PM CMU 212. The bottom half features NDSU with a building image and the text: Mondays 8:30 PM Peace Garden Rm Memorial Union, Thursdays 7:00 PM Room of Nations Memorial Union. The text "campus BIBLE studies" is written in a mix of fonts across the middle.

Mondays
7:00 PM CMU 227

Thursdays
8:30 PM CMU 212

MSUM

campus
BIBLE
studies

Mondays
8:30 PM Peace Garden Rm
Memorial Union

Thursdays
7:00 PM Room of Nations
Memorial Union

NDSU

THE BIBLE AND *sex*

We live in a sex-saturated society. There was a time when the word “sex” was said in hush tones. Today it screams at us from televisions, radios, movie screens and billboards. The saddest part is most of the time our society is engaged in illicit sex! Our culture laughs about housewives cheating on their husbands. The boundaries of our society keep moving, but God’s opinion is timeless. The Bible addresses all forms of sex very clearly. Please consider the plain scriptures on sex in the following areas:

MARRIAGE (Legitimate sex)

Genesis 1:28 *“And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”*

Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (intimacy).

Proverbs 5:18-19 *“Rejoice with the wife of thy youth...and be thou ravished always with her love.”*

1 Corinthians 7:2,5,9 *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and...defraud ye not one the other (ie, don’t withhold intimacy from spouse). for it is better to marry than to burn”* (i.e., be inflamed with lust)

Hebrews 13:4 *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”*

FORNICATION (Sex outside of marriage)

1 Corinthians 6:9 *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators.”*

1 Corinthians 6:18 *“Flee fornication...he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”*

Ephesians 5:5 *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person...hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.”*

1 Thessalonians 4:3 *“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”*

Revelation 21:8 *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

ADULTERY (Having an “affair” within marriage)

Exodus 20:14 *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”*

Leviticus 20:10 *“And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he...the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”*

Matthew 5:27-28 *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”*

1 Corinthians 6:9 *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither...adulterers.”*

Galatians 5:19, 21 *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness...and such like: of the which I tell you...that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

PORNOGRAPHY (Visual immorality)

Exodus 28:42 *“And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach.”*

Revelation 3:18 *“That thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear.”*

POLYGAMY (Having more than one spouse)

Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife (singular): and they shall be one flesh.”*

Deuteronomy 17:17 *“Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.”*

Matthew 19:5 *“For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”*

1 Timothy 3:2 *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.”*

SODOMY (Homosexuality or lesbianism)

Leviticus 18:22 *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.”*

Leviticus 20:13 *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”*

1 Kings 14:24 *“And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations.”*

Romans 1:26-27 *“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (disease).”*

1 Corinthians 6:9 *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of*

Only sex within a meaningful and committed marriage relationship can bring true satisfaction.

God? Be not deceived: neither...effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind."

2 Peter 2:6 "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes (God) condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."

Jude 1:7 "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about...going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

PEDOPHILIA (An adult molesting a child)

Matthew 18:6 "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

BEASTIALITY (A human molesting an animal)

Exodus 22:19 "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death."

Leviticus 18:23 "Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion."

Leviticus 20:16 "And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

Conclusion: Our culture is trying everything possible to find fulfillment in illicit sex. Someone said, if illicit sex really brought satisfaction, our society would shine like the noon day sun. Only sex within a meaningful and committed marriage relationship can bring true satisfaction. God gave sex within marriage as a blessing and also to replenish the earth (Gen 1:28). According to the verses above, illicit sex is strongly condemned. The eternal consequences for such sins are very serious (Eph 5:5, Rev 21:8). Is there a remedy? Thankfully there is hope. Please carefully read pages 6 and 7 for the answer. ■

does life have meaning?

Hugh Morehead is the chairman of the Dept. of Philosophy at Northeastern University. Forty-five years ago he began a hobby of writing to famous philosophers, scientists, and authors asking them, "What is the purpose of life?" The responses he got back were depressing at best.

Legendary chemist and author, Isaac Asimov wrote back, "As far as I can see there is no purpose to life." Karl Jung, the famous Austrian psychiatrist, wrote, "I don't know what the meaning or the purpose of life is, but it looks like as if there were something meant by it." And Albert Ellis, the psychiatrist who invented RET therapy said, "As far as I can tell, life has no special or intrinsic meaning or purpose." Well-known educator, Edward Gorny replied, "I doubt if there is one."

For many years now, people have been told that they are just a product of evolution. That makes them basically a refined animal. So many people today are searching for the meaning of life, and yet are not finding it. They see life as mere existence, void of any purpose or meaning. But as Christians we know that God has a purpose for our lives. The Bible says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). He doesn't want us to merely exist, but to fulfill His plan for our lives.

Solomon indicated in the book of Ecclesiastes that if we don't understand the purpose of life, it will seem useless, tiresome, and unfulfilling. Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 says, "Vanity of vanities ...all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" God tells us that when we live without His purpose and plan, it is all a waste! Only one life will soon be past, and only what's done for God will last! ■

by paul chappell

the testimony of a true christian by tony brown

A man was at a stoplight when the light turned green. Unfortunately, he was daydreaming and didn't notice. The woman behind him began honking her horn, pounding on her steering wheel, and screaming at the man to move. As the woman was ranting and carrying on, there was a tap on her window. She turned to see a policeman standing next to her car. The policeman told her to turn off her car and keep her hands in sight. Next, he ordered her to exit the car with both hands up. He then took the stunned and speechless woman to the county jail. The woman sat in a jail cell for a couple of hours until the same policeman unlocked the door and handed her belongings back to her. The woman inquired why she had put in jail. The officer smiled sheepishly and said, "I'm sorry, but I'm afraid there has been a mistake. But you see, when I pulled up to your car and heard you cussing out the guy ahead of you, I also noticed the bumper sticker on your car which said, 'What Would Jesus Do' and I noticed the Christian fish emblem. Naturally I assumed you had stolen the car!" ...While this story may make you smile, it also makes a powerful point. Talk is cheap unless backed up with a real Christian life. Only eternity will tell how many 'Christians' have hurt the name and the cause of Christ by hypocritical behavior. The name Christian is a very special and important name. If you're not really living like Christ, it may be that you need to be saved. If you have been truly born again, you need to live up to the name.



HOW TO FIND FORGIVENESS FROM GOD

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

There are three things that you can know for sure...

1) **That you are going to Heaven.** *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (I John 5:13).

2) **That your life will be changed when you get saved.** *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (II Corinthians 5:17).

3) **You will never lose your salvation.** *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."* (John 10:28).

It all revolves around Jesus Christ!

Who is Jesus Christ? John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* John 1:3 continues, *"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."* Jesus was God in flesh or God the son who created everything.

He came to earth to save us. *"For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). The first step in going to heaven is to realize we need to be saved from our sin.

How do we get to heaven?... *"Jesus answered and said unto him, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

There is a difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth. *"That which*

is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Why do we need a spiritual birth? Man was originally created a three part being in God's image—a trinity. *"And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:26). Man is made up of body, soul, and spirit.

God placed Adam and Eve in the garden. *"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:16-17). Man ate of the fruit and though he didn't die that day physically, he died spiritually!

When Adam and Eve had children they were now born spiritually dead as well (no longer in God's 3-part image). Genesis 5:3 says *"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth."* That is why we must be re-born spiritually.

That is also why we have a sin nature. You don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish, lie, steal things, sass back, fight with siblings, etc...it is also our nature as we grow up. The 10 commandments reveal our sinful condition.

#1 **"Thou shalt have no other Gods before me"** (Exodus 20:3). No one can claim that they have never put anything ahead of God (money, career, another person, own goals, pleasure, sin & vice, etc).

#2 **"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"** (Exodus 20:4). Many have been guilty of inventing a God of their own imagination and liking (a "God that overlooks sin and takes everyone to heaven").

#3 **"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain"** (Exodus 20:7). Read it carefully—are you guilty of ever doing this?

#4 **"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"** (Exodus 20:8). Have you always been faithful in this area?

#5 **"Honour thy father and thy mother"** (Exodus 20:12). Who can say that they have always honored their parents?

#6 **"Thou shalt not kill"** (Exodus 20:13). While most have never committed murder, Jesus clarifies this commandment when he tells us that to even hate or be bitter at someone is murder of the heart (Matthew 5:21-2).

#7 **"Thou shalt not commit adultery"** (Exodus 20:14). While many have never committed adultery, Jesus tells us in the Bible that to even lust after the opposite sex is adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27-8).



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Faith for Life

Forgiveness from God

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#8 **"Thou shalt not steal"** (Exodus 20:15). Who could claim that they've never taken anything that doesn't belong to them?

#9 **"Thou shalt not bear false witness"** (Exodus 20:16). (i.e., lie) No one could honestly claim they have never told a lie.

#10 **"Thou shalt not covet"** (Exodus 20:17). Have you ever desired anything you didn't need, or that wasn't yours?

Many places in the Bible tell us that liars, adulterers, idolaters, thieves, the covetous, etc., will spend eternity in hell (Revelation 21:8, I Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21).

Romans 3:10 tells us, *"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one."*

Romans 3:23 says *"for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."*

Romans 6:23 explains that sin has a penalty: *"For the wages of sin is death"* (hell).

We cannot possibly get to heaven by keeping the law (10 Commandments).

The 10 Commandments were given by God to show us how impossible it is to be saved by doing good works. *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith"* (Galatians 3:24). The law (10

commandments) shows us that we are condemned and need a Savior.

You will never get to heaven by doing good works. Titus 3:5 says, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us."* *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1).

Yet getting to heaven is not automatic just because Jesus died for your sins! Salvation is a gift that must be received. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). That means that baptism has nothing to do with being saved. Romans 6:23 explains, *"The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

How does a person know when they are ready to be born again? They know they are ready when they mean business with God, and are willing to repent of sin. Acts 3:19 says, *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."* II Peter 3:9 says the Lord is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* Jesus said, *"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13:5). That means being willing to also turn from false religion or false teaching—anything contrary to the word of God, the Bible.

To repent means to change your mind about your sin, and make Christ the Lord of your life. Are you willing to turn from

your sin and turn to God? Do you believe that Jesus paid the full price on the cross for your sins?

Though God hates sin, he loves you and sent Jesus to die for your sins. *"But God commendeth (proved) his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

If God is dealing with you about your need of forgiveness, and you would like to be saved (born again), the final step is to ask God for the gift through a simple prayer. *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). Notice the promise of this verse from a God who cannot lie. Titus 1:2 says, *"God...cannot lie"*. Do you believe that God will save you simply because He said He would? Christ will save you if you are willing to make him the Lord of your life.

If you know that you are ready, you can pray and ask God to save you in your own words such as: "Dear Heavenly Father, I know that I am a condemned sinner unable to save myself, but I am willing to turn from my sins and make Jesus my Lord and master. I now trust in His sacrifice on the cross to pay for my sins. Please forgive me and save me. Amen."

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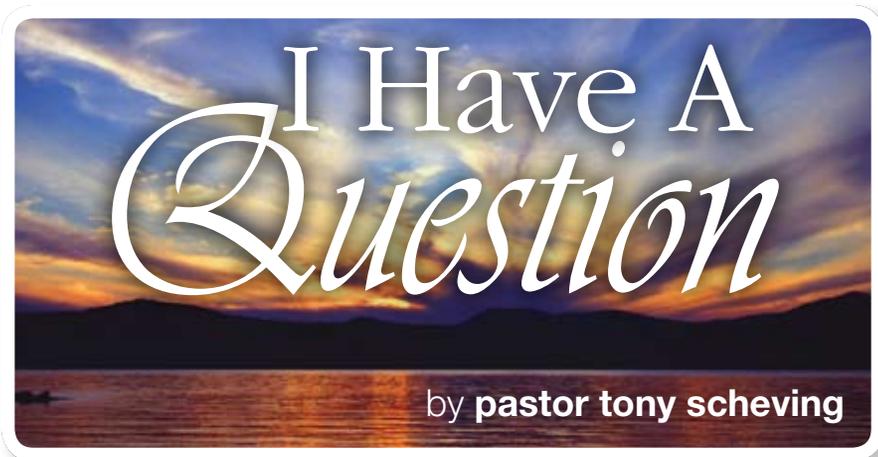
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How Can I Forgive Myself?

Laski, the famous journalist and humanist died in 1988. She was an infidel and had no time for God. But before her death she regretfully stated, “I really envy Christians ...I have no one to *forgive me.*” There is something in the human heart that knows it needs to be forgiven for wrong doings. God our Creator has wired us that way. We have a moral compass within called a conscience. Though many have done great damage to their conscience, they still know they need to be forgiven. We have all done things we’ve regretted. Some things have been so serious we feel we can’t be forgiven. In fact, some people live in perpetual punishment, flogging themselves in their minds. They want to *hurt* for what they’ve done, and don’t feel that they deserve to be forgiven. I heard of a group of kids who pulled a fire alarm as a prank, and a fireman was accidentally killed while rushing to the false alarm. Those kids struggled to live with the guilt of their folly. The Psalmist said, “*Remember not the sins of my youth*” (Ps 25:7). I know of a drunk driver who killed a pedestrian and cannot forgive himself. I know of many women who have had abortions who live in terrible guilt. In the Bible we find the likes of Moses who murdered an Egyptian, David who had his friend Uriah killed in order to hide his own sin, and Peter who denied the Lord three times. Along with many others, they struggled with self-forgiveness. How can we forgive ourselves? According to the Bible, there are several steps.

1. Accept the Rebuke

“*Despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction*” – Prov 3:11.

emotional meltdown. It doesn’t pay to run from the ramifications of foolish behavior. Facing the results of our sin is a healthy part of the process for finding forgiveness. We need to acknowledge our error, repent, and take our medicine. God corrects wrong behavior in His children out of love. The Bible says, “*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*” (Heb 12:6). As a parent, I show my kids that I love them by correcting them. The fact that I don’t let them run wild or do as they please, shows them that I care. Chastening is a part of a healthy, parent-child relationship. I heard of a boy who secretly disobeyed his parents, and walked around for days feeling miserable. The child finally went to his mom and asked for a spanking explaining his sin. He wanted to finally deal with the consequences. A child who is not properly disciplined feels guilty, rejected, and unloved. Permissiveness toward a child builds subtle resentment. In the same way, God has wired us to realize that He disciplines us for our sins because He cares about us. Something inside of us says that a wrongdoing hasn’t been rectified until we’ve accepted the rebuke. We can’t just put a band-aid over the matter, or sweep it under the carpet. Chastisement for a wrongdoing restores a relationship and builds a bridge back between a child and parent as well as a

The first thing we must do to find forgiveness is to accept the consequences of our sin. Adam and Eve were the first to try and cover up their sin. Many people today are still trying to hide behind fig leaves and wiggle out of their mistakes by lying, manipulating and blaming others. We learn to live in denial at an early age. But after a while, being the “artful dodger” can lead to an

sinner and God. God is not trying to punish us, but develop us, guide us, and correct us. There is a difference between punishment and training. The prophet Micah said, “*I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him.*”

We must accept the rebuke.

2. Abdicate the Revenge

“*Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” – Eph 4:32.

Before we can find self-forgiveness we must deal with the hard feelings we may have toward another. We cannot forgive ourselves until we have forgiven others. Jesus said in Luke 11:4, “*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.*” This is not an option. Neither is it an emotion ...it is the right thing to do! We will never forgive ourselves while we have bitterness in our hearts toward others. The Bible says, “*lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and*

thereby many be defiled” (Heb 12:15). Notice from that verse that your bitterness will cause you trouble before it affects others. Everybody loses when

Instead of trying to feel forgiven, focus on God’s forgiveness.

we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts. Jesus set the example on the cross when He asked His Father to forgive those who had crucified Him. A person who won’t forgive others will self-destruct. A woman was visiting a marriage counselor when she stated that she wanted a divorce from her husband. When the counselor enquired why, she bitterly stated, “Because he’s ruined the last 15 years of my life.” The counselor wisely replied, “and he will also ruin the next 15 years of your life as well, because of your inner bitterness.” When you practice forgiveness you’ll discover that someone has been set free, and you’ll realize

continued on next page

Faith for Life

that person is you! You will never forgive yourself until you've forgiven others.

3. Abandon the Rationale

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart" – I Jn 3:20

If we are going to forgive ourselves, we are going to have to abandon our way of thinking and embrace what God says. The reason we walk around in self-condemnation is because we don't feel like we can be forgiven. But feeling is the opposite of faith. The verse above reminds us to listen to God before we listen to our hearts. The Bible tells us in Prov 3:5, *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."* We need to focus on God's promises in the Bible, instead of our feelings. Does God say He will forgive us? The Bible says, *"Bless the LORD, O my soul... Who forgiveth all thine iniquities... Who redeemeth thy life from destruction"* (Ps 103:2-4). God says in Heb 10:17, *"Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."* Instead of trying to feel forgiven, focus on God's forgiveness. Before he became a believer, the Apostle Paul was involved in persecuting Christians, and stoning godly Stephen to death. How did Paul ever find the grace later on to forgive himself for the terrible things he had done before he was a Christian? He must have claimed promises like, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he (God) removed our transgressions from us"* (Ps 103:12). Paul was able to bury the skeletons of his past and move on. He later wrote in Phil 3:13, *"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before..."* If we focus on God's forgiveness we will be able to forgive ourselves and move on. We serve the "God of the second chance." We need to abandon our own rationale and trust God's promises.

4. Advance the Relationship

"Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" – Luke 7:47

The verse above describes Mary Magdalene who was a prostitute and even demon-possessed before she found the Lord. Before someone can truly find self-forgiveness, they must be re-born spiritually (see pages 6-7). After Mary Magdalene was spiritually saved, she went on to forgive herself for her past and live an outstanding Christian life. She is mentioned in all four gospels. She was at the crucifixion and followed the body of Christ to the tomb. She was the first one there on resurrection morning and the first human to see the resurrected Christ! Mary Magdalene didn't let her past haunt her. Like the verse above mentions, she let it be a springboard to draw her closer to God. The fact she had been forgiven caused her to love the Lord all the more! The thought of being forgiven for our past mistakes ought to advance our relationship with God.

5. Analyze the Results

"Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb 12:15).

If we don't eventually forgive ourselves, it will not only affect our lives, but the lives of others. If Peter had never forgiven himself for denying the Lord, others would have suffered. Peter would not have been there to preach on the day of Pentecost when 3000 people were saved. If Moses had never forgiven himself for killing the Egyptian, he would never have led the Jewish slaves into the promised land. No man is an island. Others are watching us including our spouse, our kids, our friends, and loved ones. If we don't forgive ourselves, others will suffer. We don't want to be a stumbling block to them. The verse above says, *"many shall be defiled."* If a woman never forgives herself for a past abortion, her family will suffer for it. If a man never forgives himself for mistreating someone, it will affect all other relationships. We all have scars from our past. How will we react to them? As Christians we need to overcome our past and catch a vision of what God wants to do through us. Think about the genealogy of Jesus. In His bloodline (Matt 1 & Luke 3), we find a heathen woman named Tamar, a harlot named Rahab, a pagan woman named Ruth, and a Hittite

woman named Bathsheba who committed adultery. All of these recovered from self-condemnation and were used of God. It's humbling and wonderful to know we serve the "God of the second chance." If you have scars from your past, carefully consider God's forgiveness. Let me close with an illustration. Ernest Hemingway told the story of a young man named Paco who had broken his father's heart and run away from home in disgrace. His father traveled throughout Spain looking to be reconciled with his son. He finally narrowed his search to the city of Madrid. The father put a newspaper ad in the paper saying "Paco, all is forgiven. Please come home. I will meet you tomorrow by the city fountain." The next day, 800 boys named Paco showed up looking for forgiveness. Forgiveness is something we all inwardly crave and need. May we look to the Lord and his promises to find it.

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God's Mercy Awaits

A little boy who was visiting his grandparents was given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods but he could never hit his target. As he came back to his grandma's backyard, he spied her pet duck. On an impulse, he took aim and let it fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead.

The boy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all but she said nothing. After lunch that day, his grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck!" So Johnny did the dishes.

After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally's, he finally couldn't stand it anymore. He confessed to his grandma that he'd killed the duck. "I know, Johnny," she said, giving him a hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you."

Maybe your life could be compared to Johnny's life? Always living in fear your sin or failure will be found out? Why live in slavery to sin when you can enjoy the freedom Christ offers you? Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

The Bible says in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God's holiness demands justice, but His love shows mercy. There is no sin in our lives that God doesn't already know about. When we repent and are born again, all our sins are forgiven.

Many people avoid God because they fear His wrath and judgment. Although God is a holy God and hates sin, He loves you. Like Johnny's grandmother, He stands ready to forgive you if you seek Him in salvation (see page 6-7 of this issue). Are you "hiding" something from God right now? Friend, realize He knows about it and more than anything He longs to forgive you, not punish you. Repent of your sin to God and seek His forgiveness right now.

"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." John 8:34

NOT GOOD ENOUGH BY DAN ACEITUNA

JERUSALEM, CIRCA 33 A.D...

The mob was now stirred into a frenzy; they were no longer satisfied with merely screaming, "Crucify Him!" They began spitting, cursing, and flinging any object they perceived harmful. Jesus, marred beyond recognition, could barely carry the large wooden structure that would soon produce the worst part of His ordeal. Yet, His mind stayed on His chosen task, the reason He came to earth, the reason for enduring an abusive night at Herod's, and the heart-wrenching abandonment by the twelve He loved. In spite of all the pain and rejection inflicted by the very creatures He breathed life into, His mind stayed on their need and that of Fred P. Johnson ... Moments later, each driven nail brought forth a new meaning to pain, and a renewed sense of joy that Fred would be spared far worse in eternity. In the end, as Jesus gave up the ghost, His thoughts were not angry for having unjustly endured the penalty for Fred's sin, but rather gladness knowing that Fred's way to heaven was now possible, if Fred chose to accept the payment made

on his behalf. God, looking down on His bruised begotten, was greatly impressed by what the Son had endured for the sake of the very ones who had bruised Him. So satisfied was God by his Son's dying sacrifice, that for Christ's sake, Fred P. Johnson's payment for sin was now considered finished.

NORTH DAKOTA,
CIRCA 2009 A.D...

Fred signed the last check; the bills would soon be mailed on time, and along with them a hundred dollars toward his favorite charity. Yes, Fred thought, it felt good to do right, not to mention the eternal benefits. He thought back to all the good deeds he had done, the help he had been to others, and the many hours of sitting in church enduring all those sermons. Sure, there were bad things in the mix (nobody's perfect), but Fred made a good effort to keep sinful acts at a minimum. He kept the scale tipped in his favor, and had resolved to do so until the end; a worker's work is never finished. Yes, Fred quietly assured himself, God will be impressed.

JUDGMENT DAY, SOONER
THAN ANTICIPATED...

Fred now stood trembling, before God. "And what do you have to offer, as payment for your sins?" God said with just His eyes. But before Fred could offer his best, God began to replay the ordeal that Jesus Christ had endured. As Fred watched the agony on Christ's face, and considered the injustice of having to wrongly endure the crucifixion, his mind suddenly remembered a thought he had long ago while daydreaming during his communion class. "Why," he had briefly mused, "do we have to do all this to pay for our sins, if Christ supposedly paid for it on the cross?" Yes! Fred realized, 'I remember thinking that' . . . The replay was over, and God's focus was once again on Fred. "I endured that for you," God silently inferred by revealing his nail scarred hands for the first time, "That's what it took to pay for your sins, and what do you offer as payment?" Fred took a long tearful look at the wounds, and thought, "never mind . . . who was I kidding?"

faith & finances

“How to Retire Debt”



Is it spiritual to talk about money? Well, the Bible speaks of money and materialism as much as any other subject. Our Creator knows there is a sensitive nerve that runs from the heart to the wallet. Covetousness and financial mismanagement have been the ruin of many marriages and lives. The problem in most cases is not a lack of money, but a lack of control over spending.

The key is to not live beyond our means. For a Christian, this means “living on the level that God supplies” and being content with what we have. Paul the Apostle said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil 4:11). It is a great day when we learn that things don’t equal joy. Jesus said “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Covetousness says, “I want more than I can actually afford and I deserve it.” Of course the retailers feed this attitude with advertising that screams “Buy now, pay later.”

Society has ‘trained’ people to be “good little consumers” and the American dream has become a nightmare. Sadly we end up paying for it in ways we never dreamed! I’m talking about late night fights with the spouse over money, creditors calling, nasty letters, car being repossessed, sleepless nights, bad credit, lawyers, divorce court, etc. It can be very humbling. Financial trouble is normally due to irresponsibility, covetousness, no budget, and a lack of planning. Trying to keep up with the Jones’ is a sad path to the bankruptcy court. You are not a balanced Christian if this area of your life is out of control.

If you are struggling financially, the cause is most likely not your income or the economy. The problem is usually a “heart” problem. The key to victory is repentance and a “mid-course correction.” With the economy currently in the tank and getting

You will be amazed at how quickly you can go from “hopelessness” to financial freedom if you will be disciplined and stick with your game plan. You will have a lot of fun along the way as you retire one debt after another.

worse, what can a Christian do to retire debt? Consider the following:

You must find a surplus of money, and it doesn’t have to be much. The first step is to find a way to save \$5 a day. That’s right, just \$5 a day which translates into \$150/mo. This can be achieved by packing a lunch instead of eating out, or drinking water instead of pop or cappuccinos. How about skipping the candy bar out of the vending machine. You could save gas money by organizing your trips, or not “tooling” around town so much. You could help your cause by buying a little older car. You could abandon cable or satellite TV and high speed internet.

You also don’t need to have the latest electronic gadget or software for your computer. You could shop at a less extravagant store, or even the second hand store. You could cut back on fancy gifts.

How about changing your own oil? You would also be wise to shop around for better insurance rates. Of course eating simpler and cooking from scratch could save a lot of money each month. There are 1001 ways to save \$5/day or \$150/mo. My Dad used to always say, if you watch the pennies, the dollars will take care of themselves. No amount is too insignificant to save.

The next step is to lay out all of your debt. Let’s say you owe \$100,000 on your house, \$10,000 on your school loans, \$7000 on your car, \$4000 toward the hospital maternity bill, \$2000 on your furniture, and \$1000 on the credit card. Conventional wisdom says to try and pay off the debt with the highest interest rate first. Actually it would probably work better to just focus on the smallest debt and seek to pay that off first. The goal is to take the \$150/month surplus and apply it toward the credit card bill while continuing to make all of the normal monthly payments.

Within a few months you should have the credit card paid off. Now the goal is to take what you were formerly paying monthly on the credit card, plus the \$150 surplus and attack the furniture loan. Within a several months you should have that paid off. Next, you want to take the \$150/month surplus along with the former monthly payments on the credit card and furniture bill, and use it to pay off the hospital maternity bill. Well, I think you can see where this is heading. You will be amazed at how quickly you can go from “hopelessness” to financial freedom if you will be disciplined and stick with your game plan. You will have a lot of fun along the way as you retire one debt after another. Next time, in *Faith for Life* we will be discussing the hindrances in making this happen. In the mean time, get going at being thrifty and saving \$5/day!

If you would like to receive free Biblical Financial counseling please call the staff of Fargo Baptist Church at 232-5500.

Pastor's Perspective

KNOWING WHAT TO DO!

"Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path." Psalm 27:11

Life requires constant decisions. *Who should I marry? What should I do for a living? Where should I live and work?* The list is endless. Quite often we wonder if we're *doing the right thing*. Years ago, someone saw a make-shift sign on the back of a U-haul truck. It said, "If I'm not heading west, please stop me and turn me around." An old Jewish proverb says, "It's better to ask the way ten times, than take a wrong road one time." We all need direction, right? Let's be honest. There are some things you can't know by reading a book or taking a class. We can't figure them out intellectually. The Bible says, *"Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?"* (Prov 20:24) Well, imagine having God Himself guide you through life. We don't know the future and what would be best for us, but God does! Wouldn't it be wonderful if our Sovereign God would lead us in a plain path like the verse above says? How can we find the "plain path" of life?

Through Discipleship

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14

According to the verse above, our Creator cannot guide us until we're truly *His child*. This takes place when we are born again into His family (see pages 6-7). To be led by the Lord, you must be a disciple of the Lord. I received Christ as the Lord of my life in 1981. Since then, He has guided me out of the electrical business and into the ministry. God led me to marry the one who is now my wife. He has led me to Fargo and the pastorate of Fargo Baptist Church. He has led me through several building projects and to the location and church facilities currently along the interstate. He has led our church into numerous ministries. It is a great thing for a Christian to hear the voice of the Lord telling him what to do. It's like the man who went for a swim an hour before sundown. Just when he swam out into deep water about 100 yards from shore, a fog settled in. It was so thick he couldn't see the shore or any landmarks. He swam in various directions panicking until he was exhausted. He then began to cry out for help until he was hoarse. Finally he heard a faint voice calling from shore and he swam to safety in the direction of the voice before sundown. Often we try to swim through life in the dark. We need to hear the voice of God calling us toward the right direction. Though we don't hear the voice of God

audibly in our ears, yet we can have that still peace in our hearts when we've found His perfect will for our lives. The first step in being led by the Lord is through discipleship (being saved). But there is a second requirement.

Through Doctrine

"Faith cometh by hearing...the Word of God."
Romans 10:17

In 1937, the Buddhist spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama died. As he passed away, his head slumped over and faced the east. His students felt this was a sign, and went east in pursuit of the next Dalai Lama. Heading east, two years later they found a little two year old boy in a remote farm house who was born on the same day the Dalai Lama had died. They were sure this was the reincarnated Dalai Lama, and 70 years later he is still the current spiritual leader of Tibet. But this is not how God directs and leads. For starters, there is no such thing as reincarnation. The Bible states, *"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Heb 9:27). Secondly, God doesn't lead by mystical signs. Jesus said, *"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign"* (Mt 12:39). How does God lead us? Christ said, *"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth...thy word (Bible) is truth"* (Jn 16:13/17:17). The direction we're taking in life should always line up with the Bible. If the doctrine of any church or preacher goes contrary to true scripture, you should avoid them like the plague. The Bible says, *"If they speak not according to this word (God's), it is because there is no light in them"* (Isa 8:20). God never leads us contrary to His Word. Follow the doctrine! How else does God lead us?

Through Deference

"Not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 22:42

An old time preacher once said; "When we are saved and submitting to God, life is not only full of joy, but spontaneity and expectancy of what God is going to do next." As Christians, we don't have to fear what God wants us to do. Before going to the cross to die, Jesus quoted the verse above, *"Not my will, but thine, be done."* If we trust God with the outcome, He will show us what to do. Abe Lincoln said, "When the Almighty wants me to do or not do something, He finds a way of letting me know." Often we think we have to manipulate and work behind the scenes to connive and pull strings in order to "make it happen." Actually, we need to just trust God and take our hands off the wheel of our lives and let God steer. It's not a matter of scheming and plotting, but just obeying God and submitting to His perfect plan for our lives. Are you currently obedient and submissive to God in every area of your life? C.S. Lewis said, "There are two types of Christians. There are those who say, 'Not my will, but thine, be done', and those who say with an annoyed attitude, 'alright then God, have it your way!'" God cannot guide us with that frame of mind. When God guided Paul in Acts chapters 13 and 16, Paul was totally yielded in obedience to whatever God wanted to do with his life. Are

you submitted to God's perfect will for your life? As we read on, we notice a fourth way which God leads us.

Through Difficulty

"God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no." Deuteronomy 8:2

Sometimes God will lead us through difficulties. He may be growing us up through troubles. The man Job suffered like few men have suffered, but God was leading him through his struggles. Moses went through a very dark period in his life, but God was using it to guide him. Ruth, the heathen woman, lost her husband and homeland, but God used it to make her a believer in the one true God. Many times when our plans go awry, God will use it to lead and guide us. The Bible says, *"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* (Rom 8:28). When you're going through a difficult trial in life, continue to follow and trust God.

Through Doubt

"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."
Mark 9:24

Someone so well said, "It wouldn't be faith, if there wasn't some doubt involved." Someone else said, "Faith is when God's heavenly plan makes no earthly sense." In Acts 16, Paul was struggling to figure out what God wanted him to do. I can relate to Paul. There are few things I want more in life than to know what God wants me to do next. If I'm going to buy something or make any type of a decision, I want to be sure I'm doing the right thing. Well, our Creator is a God who guides, and a Lord who leads. Many years ago the devout Christian, Admiral Thomas Williams, was sailing the Atlantic when he had this irresistible urge to steer his ship off course to an uninhabited island in the far distance. His men thought he was crazy, but there was something about that little island that drew the Admiral to it. As they drew closer to the island, they saw a white flag as a distress signal. Once ashore they found 16 men starving to death who had been shipwrecked weeks earlier. Williams credited God with leading him to that island. In Ps 32:8, God says, *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye."* How wonderful it is to be led by the Lord!

Pastor Tony Scheving
pastor tony scheving

